

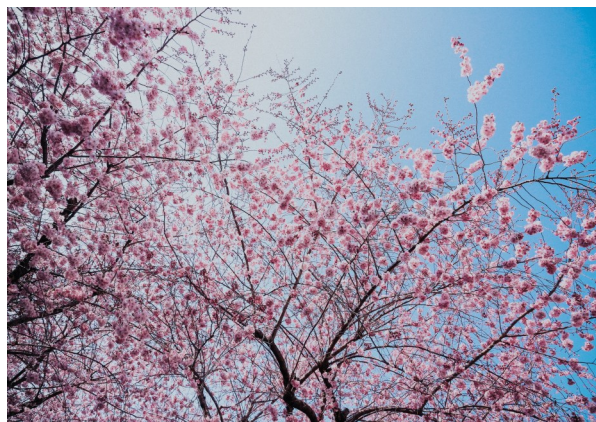
# THE DODGER DIGEST

APRIL 2019

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**M**adison School Community,  
I hope that you are all healthy and well as spring greets us with welcome warmth and sunshine.

Thank you for taking the time to read this April issue of the Dodger Digest. Early spring is an exciting time in the annual cycle of a school district when we finalize our financial planning for the upcoming school year through the budget development and approval process. On March 19, 2019, I presented a Preliminary Budget Presentation to the Board of Education which included an update on the district's financial position and our key priorities for the 2019-20 school year. This presentation will be followed by a 2019-20 Final Budget Hearing on April 25, 2019 and the Final Budget Adoption at the April 30, 2019 meeting of the Board of Education.



As the Preliminary Budget Presentation is intended to set forth our projected revenues and intended expenditures, including an overview of key changes for the coming year, the Final Budget Presentation will include a more detailed account of our financial picture and the many exciting measures that we are putting in place. To expand on the Preliminary Budget, I am pleased to share that the following will be included in Final Budget Presentation:

- Universal Full Day Kindergarten for all Madison families
- Six new MHS courses including AP Microeconomics, AP Computer Science A, Biotechnology, Engineering and Design Technology, Broadcast Journalism, and Media Literacy
- A new MHS Girls Ice Hockey Program
- The *Spatial-Temporal (ST) Math* Program from MIND Research Institute for grades K-2
- The Schoolwide Fundamentals balanced literacy program for grades K-5
- Special Education Improvements including the following additional positions:
  - Elementary Autism Class Teacher
  - MHS Special Education Teacher
  - MJS Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultant
  - MJS Clinical Therapist
  - District Behaviorist
- Classlink single sign-on technology for all staff and students to increase instructional time and cybersecurity
- Granicus Board management software to improve public access to district information
- Facilities improvements including a new MHS wrestling room floor, improved temperature controls, new student bathrooms and air conditioning in some of our most climate sensitive rooms

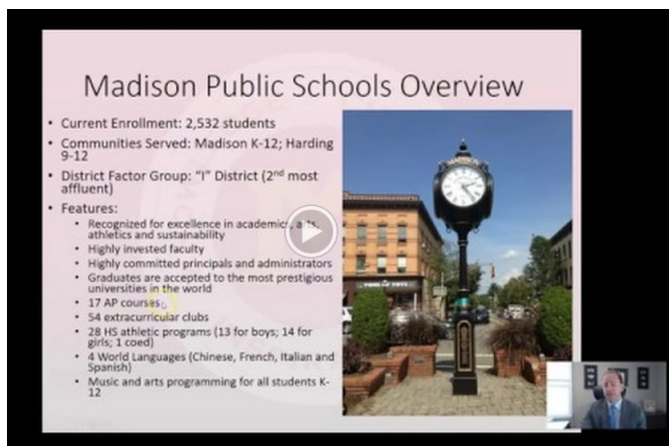
These improvements build upon the many recent program expansions that our district has accomplished including, but not limited to:

- A K-12 STEAM program with state of the art STEAM Labs at MJS and MHS. These labs house 3D printers, laser cutters, CNC machines and other essential tools for engineering design and prototyping.
- A new MHS Music Wing with Chorus and Orchestra Rooms
- A new state of the art Audio Visual system in the MHS Auditorium
- A new state of the art LED Stage Lighting System at the MJS Auditorium
- A newly renovated MHS Locker Room and Fitness Center (construction to begin this spring)

If you are interested in learning more about our district, please view last year's State of the Schools Address. Given in June of 2018, the Address drew attention to the traditional strengths and successes of our diverse program offerings and academic tradition, which has been driven by high community expectations and a strong professional culture among our staff. We also identified a variety of areas for improvement that will empower our schools to maintain their reputation for academic excellence. If you have not viewed the State of the Schools address recently, I encourage you to do so again in advance of the 2019 Address which will be delivered in the coming months.

Sincerely,

Mark Schwarz, *Superintendent of Schools*



## Aligning our Systems to Support our students

Since my appointment as Superintendent of Madison Public Schools in May of 2017, I have made it my highest priority to build an accurate understanding of the complexities of our community, district and schools. During my first year, I focused my attention on becoming part of Madison, listening to staff, students and community members, and collecting data to inform a comprehensive picture of our strengths and areas for improvement. In June of 2018, I reported on the most significant of my findings at that time in our State of the Schools Address.

As you watch the Address, you will find many reasons to celebrate, including high achievement among non-disadvantaged pupils, student acceptances to the best universities in the world, high graduation rates, and top quality course offerings. We have a vibrant culture of community involvement that supports a myriad of extracurricular activities, including nationally recognized arts and music programs, championship winning athletic teams, and immersive service learning programs. Through generous volunteerism and fundraising from the Madison Education Foundation, Madison Music and Arts, various booster clubs, PTOS and community donors, the frontiers of our offerings are constantly expanding. For all of these reasons, Madison Schools are consistently placed near the top of the many ranking systems.

Even with all of these incredible attributes, the Address also makes clear that our schools have many areas that are clearly in need of development. The information presented represents the beginning of a multi-year journey of continuous improvement for Madison schools and we are committed to furthering our understanding of the student experience. In this effort, we are refining our capacity to merge and analyze data sets that include student test scores, survey responses, demographic information and anecdotal accounts. This process has enabled us to identify trends and correlations that may drive future improvement efforts. Some of our key findings have shown that despite our successes:

- At all levels and within all subgroups, Madison students are experiencing wellness issues, burnout and boredom at concerning rates in grades 3-12. Such finding for these ages include:
  - 74% of students report feeling burned out or overloaded by school work
  - 63% of students report feeling bored once a day or more
  - 28% of students do not feel as though they have an adult that they trust
  - Students and parents reports confirm that roughly 30% of MJS and MHS students spend two hours or more on school work each night
  - Teachers at all grades indicate that many students are suffering from motivational issues
- Madison parents are relying on private tutoring for their children at extremely high rates. Of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students, 53% have used a private tutor at some point in their education.
- Demographic factors including ethnicity and economic disadvantages (measured by enrollment in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program) correlate with significant perceptual and academic differences, including an achievement gap of roughly 30 proficiency points in math and language arts across all grades (see the [NJ School Performance Reports for 2017-18](#))

While it may be unrealistic to believe that our schools will fully remediate all of these concerns, we are monitoring these indicators because they fall largely within a school's sphere of influence (for example, see this [NY Times Article](#) on how schools can improve boredom). Further, a growing body of research and theory links social emotional factors to student achievement with strong evidence that teachers and school principals have the highest capacity to impact educational progress. Particularly, when principals are empowered with the authority to hire the best teachers, to drive learning initiatives, and to lead the professional learning environment, their ability to integrate academic and social emotional imperatives is unparalleled. If you are interested in exploring the research which supports these claims, please take some time to explore the following:

- The Wallace Foundations' report, [The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better teaching and Learning](#) and their [presentation to the Senate on Educational Leadership](#)
- [Michael Fullan's](#) body of work on collaborative leadership—For an introduction to his vision, see his article, [The Principalship has Changed](#); For a deeper dive, read his book, [The Principal](#)
- [Richard DuFour's](#) work on the [Principal's role in leading professional learning communities](#)
- [Wayne K. Hoy's](#) research on [Academic Optimism](#)
- Gray, Kruse, and Tartar's 2009 study on [Enabling School Structures](#)

Through this research-based lens, we have employed a principal and teacher centered, collaborative approach within the administrative model that I had inherited. To formalize our process, we developed a research-based project management system that includes community, faculty and student involvement in the decision-making process (see Figure 1). The system also ensures that our actions are empowered by research and that our workflow is organized within a software system that enables projects to be assigned to individuals, with clear process, collaboration and reporting protocols.

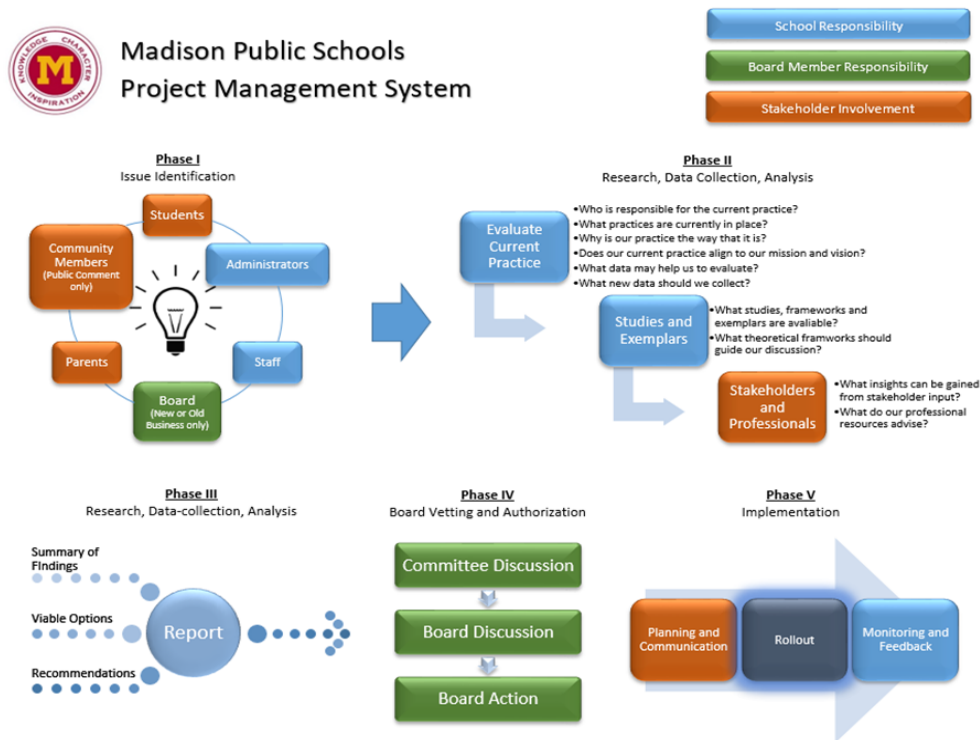
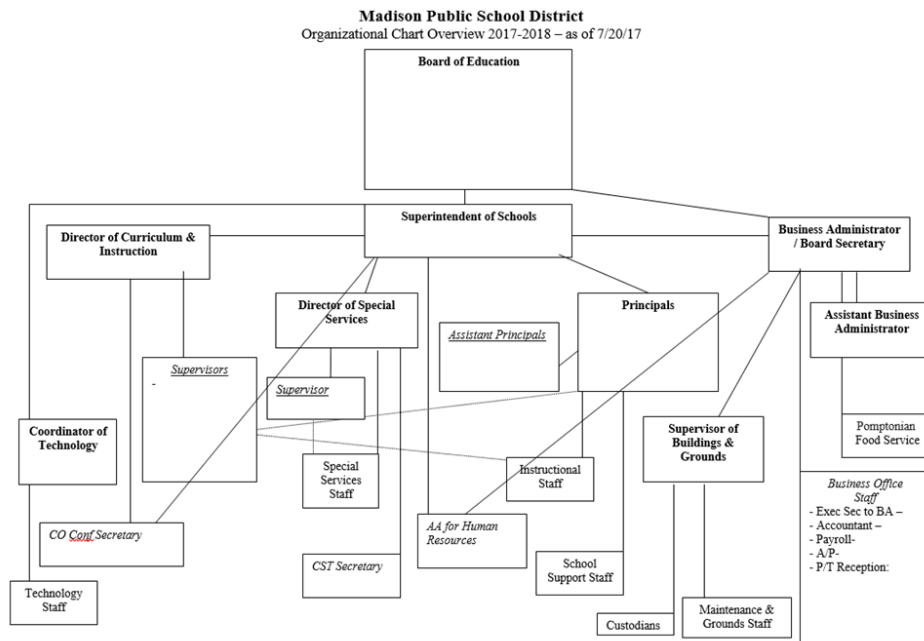


Figure 1: The Madison Public Schools Project Management System was developed and implemented in May 2018. All Board and district processes are now managed by this process on the Trello software platform.

While this system was immediately embraced by our Board, Central Office and leadership team, attempting to implement the process revealed that our administrative model suffered from significant role confusion. The organizational chart produced an unclear chain of command and dual reporting structures throughout the organization, which made it difficult to determine who was responsible for the intended improvements (see Figure 2). Additionally, principals and faculty reported feeling under-supported by a Central Office that lacked thoughtful systems and a service mindset.

To begin the process of improving our effectiveness, we restructured and realigned Central Office positions and responsibilities. The revised district organization includes:

- Creation of a new Human Resources Department
- Movement of payroll from the Business Office to the HR Department
- Elimination of the Assistant Business Administrator position
- Elevation of two director positions to Assistant Superintendent roles with new reporting structures
- Merging the Superintendent Secretary and the Receptionist positions



**Figure 2: This Central Office organizational chart dated July 2017 illustrates the significant role confusion and dual reporting problems of the prior administrative model.**

These changes are shown in our proposed organizational chart, which clarifies responsibilities, balances direct reports and places community and principal support at the core of the Central Office's purpose (See Figure 3). While these changes have quickly facilitated improvements in the functioning of the Central Office and Board of Education, role confusion and an unclear distribution of authority continue to persist in our schools.

No one is to blame for this difficulty, however. It is merely symptomatic of our existing dual control system whereby Principals and Supervisors have overlapping responsibilities for staff, curriculum and instruction. This matrixed governance model is now common in New Jersey, although it emerged only recently in response to the high-stakes standardized assessment movement that became most well-known via the Federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Madison derived its supervisory structure only in 2012, by replacing MHS department chairs with district content supervisor roles that do not report to the Principals). The design of the district supervisor structure may be well intended, but there is an alarming absence of research available to support that this model has an observable benefit to student achievement or student wellness. In fact, like most of the nation's school districts, Madison's achievement gap and rankings have done little more than waver since 2012.

As a solution to the continuing role confusion and rigid specialization within our current structure, I have proposed a new administrative model which places school leadership squarely in the hands of the Principals who are supported by a small, but highly versatile central office team, instructional coaches and a variety of other school-based supports. Here are some highlights of how this support will be distributed within the schools under the proposed model:

- MHS will be led by the Principal and four Vice Principals. Each VP will have a set of responsibilities that includes chairing one or more high school departments, supporting a grade level of students, and leading specific aspects of MHS operations (including athletics, activities, facilities, safety and security, scheduling, guidance and college and career planning).
- MJS will retain its model of team teaching and will also receive a new clinical therapist and a new learning disabilities teacher consultant.



## NEW DISTRICT ORG CHART (TO BE PROPOSED APRIL 2019)

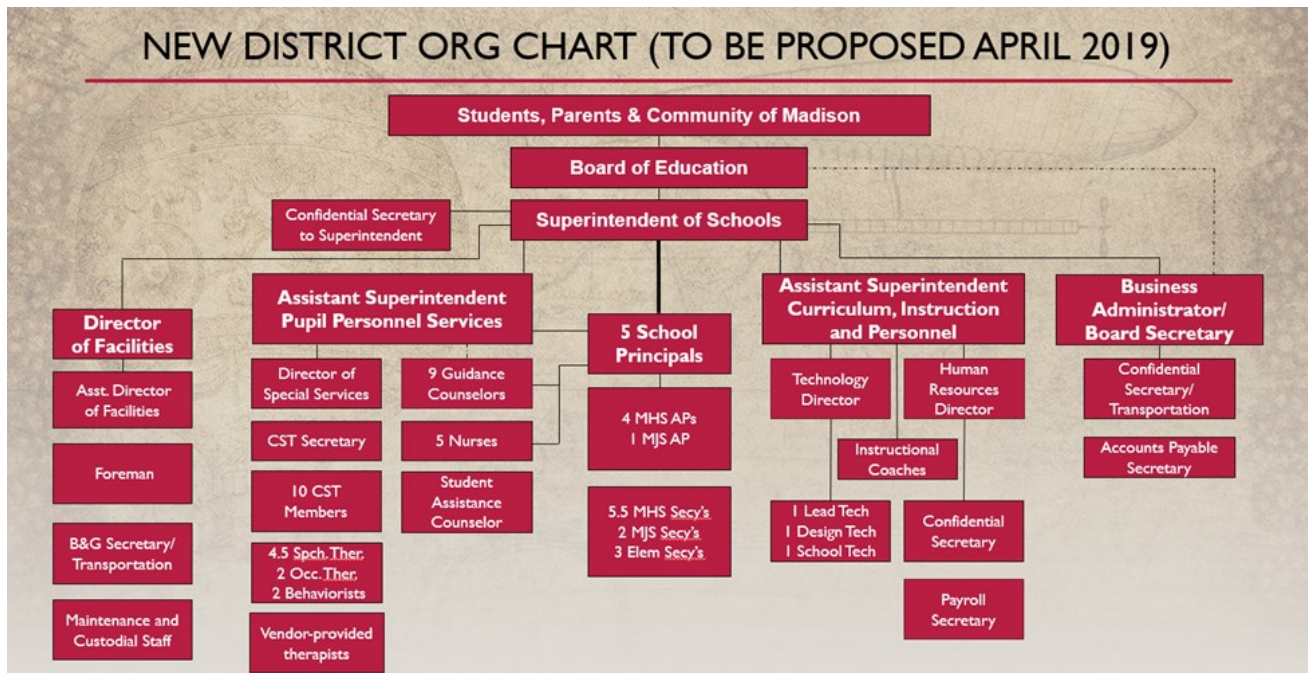


Figure 3: The proposed Madison Schools Organizational Chart features clear reporting lines and eliminates dual reports. The model reduces the number of administrators and secretaries from the 2017-18 model by 4 full time positions

- The elementary schools' supports were enhanced this current school year by the creation of two instructional coaches and an additional guidance counselor position.
- All schools will be supported by the Central Office staff that will schedule and facilitate collaboration and articulation committees throughout the year.

In planning for the transition to this new model, we have been engaging with staff and community members to ensure that we account for all aspects of student and program support. Through these talks, we have identified the particular need to ensure that responsibilities for athletics supervision, guidance services, and arts and music coordination are each assigned to individuals that have sufficient time and talent to foster the continued growth of our programs. Further, it will be imperative that contingency plans be made to account for responsibilities that will need to be transitioned during personnel changes over this summer.

As we finalize our plans and move toward 2019-20, however, this model will align the efforts of the faculty, principals, Central Office and the Board of Education in the pursuit of targeted academic and social emotional goals for students. Teaching and learning decisions will be made by teams of teachers and principals. The Central Office will exist to ensure that the proper supports and accountability systems are in place. With this alignment, we will now have the operational capacity to fully engage in shared decision-making through our process management system. Essentially, we will all now be able to work in concert to engage in meaningful change for students.

While our improvement and efficiency efforts should be encouraging, I recognize that change is difficult. It requires us to let go of familiar structures, to challenge our assumptions, and to part with people that we have formed relationships with and respect. However, thoughtful change also creates opportunities to enhance strength and foster creativity. In the words of Albert Einstein, "The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking."

Thank you for your openness to this new vision of school operation. The greatest asset of the Madison Schools is the community's interest in our students' success. In the coming months, we will continue to share regarding our progress in this transition. It is a privilege to partner with you as we serve the amazing youth of Madison.

-Mark Schwarz, Superintendent of Madison Public Schools

## A FOCUS ON SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELLNESS



For the 2018-2019 school year, Madison Public Schools partnered with Care Plus New Jersey to provide school-based mental health services to students at Madison High School. This partnership has resulted in the provision of coordinated therapeutic intervention for general and special education students across grades 9-12. In addition to clinical counseling for students, the Care Plus clinician, Ms. Solano, has consulted and collaborated with parents, school faculty and school leaders regarding appropriate supports for students. These specialized services have yielded positive results and increased the district's capacity to service a wider array of students' needs.

Based on the positive impact Care Plus has evidenced at Madison High School, the district plans to extend these services to Madison Junior School for the 2019-2020 school year. The addition of Care Plus at Madison Junior School will enable increased numbers of students in grades 6 through 8 to receive direct and explicit intervention within the area of social-emotional functioning. Additionally, parents and school staff will receive guidance and training regarding specific strategies and techniques to further enhance the students' school experience.

At Madison Junior School, the intervention provided by Care Plus will be in addition to the building-wide initiatives already in place to address student wellness. Specialized supports designed to address students' diverse needs are also provided in class-wide lessons, as well as individual and small group school-based counseling services. At the elementary level, similar supports are provided by the School Counselors, School Psychologists and instructional staff. Through character education initiatives, social skills groups and school-based counseling services, school staff strive to foster students' prosocial behaviors and increase positive outcomes for all individuals.

As the district continues to refine practices and plan for the upcoming 2019-2020 school year, our efforts focus on addressing the social-emotional needs of our students. The district will also take direct actions aimed at equipping parents, faculty, and school leaders with the tools necessary to facilitate increased opportunities for building wellness among our students. It is through these concerted and collaborative efforts that the district will improve the overall well-being of all stakeholders in the learning community.

-Contributed by Dr. Frank Santora, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services